

REMARKS

Claims 1-73 are now pending in the application. Minor claim amendments have been made to clarify the language therein. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejections in view of the remarks contained herein.

REJECTION UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102 AND § 103

Claims 1-8, 11-24, 26-37, 39-51, 53-65, 67-68 and 69-73 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Okazaki (U.S. Pat. No. 6,550,782). Additionally, claims 9-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over by Okazaki (U.S. Pat. No. 6,550,782) in view of Abe et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,070,882). Likewise, claims 25, 38, 52, and 66 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over by Okazaki (U.S. Pat. No. 6,550,782) in view of Stritzke (U.S. Pat. No. 5,267,740). Each rejection is respectfully traversed.

At the outset, Applicants note that Claim 1, along with independent claims 27, 39, 53 and 67, have each been amended to further include the statement of "said inner sealing portion and said outer stopper portion each extend around a majority of said gasket opening." The Examiner cites Okazaki against all pending claims, either alone or in combination with other prior art. With respect to claim 1, Applicants respectfully submits that the art cited by the Examiner fails to disclose, teach or suggest a sealing gasket having the flexible inner sealing portion and the flexible outer stopper portion extend around a majority of the same gasket opening.

Specifically, Okazaki discloses an elastic metal sheet 1 having a plurality of combustion chamber openings 2 and a plurality of passage holes 3 with a coating of sealing material applied to the front side, rear side, or both. See col. 4 lines 56-64.

Okazaki further discloses beads 5 formed in an area surrounding the combustion chamber opening 2. See *Id.* Further, the bead 6 surrounds hole 3. Additionally, the bead 5 is a full bead and can provide a spring property; likewise, the bead 6 is a half bead and has a stepped shape. See col. 7 lines 57-62. Additionally, the sealing material on the bead 5 is a thermally resistant sealing material 7, 17, and the sealing material around the bead 6 is a water/oil resistant sealing material 8, 18. See col. 5 lines 18 - 24.

The Examiner states that the flexible inner sealing portion is an inner portion adjacent to the opening 2 and having the sealing material 8 and 18. However, the sealing material 8 and 18 is associated with the bead 6, as stated above, that is adjacent to the oil passage opening 3, not the opening 2, as asserted by the Examiner. Even more, the Examiner alleges that the bead 5 is a flexible outer stopper portion. However, as is clearly shown in Figure 1, the bead 5 (the alleged flexible outer stopper portion) only surrounds the cylinder opening 2 and the bead 6 (the alleged inner sealing portion) only surrounds the oil passage opening 3. Therefore, Okazaki does not disclose the amended claim 1 that includes the inner sealing portion and the outer stopper portion each extend around at least a majority of a common gasket opening. Therefore, applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw and remove the above rejections.

As previously stated, the Examiner alleges that bead 5 is the flexible outer stopper portion. Claim 1 states that said flexible stopper acting in conjunction with said inner sealing portion and with respect to the same said gasket opening to flexibly limit the amount of compression of said inner sealing portion and being less flexible than

said inner sealing portion[.]" (Emphasize added). Yet, Okazaki only discloses the bead 5 and the sealing material to limit the amount of compression. Again, Okazaki is silent regarding the inner portion of the opening 2. Even more, the Examiner states that the bead 5 is less flexible to the inner portion of the opening 2, "since one is a half bead and the other is a full bead 5." See Office Action, page 3. However, Okazaki states that the bead 5 is a full bead and the bead 6 is a half bead. Okazaki is silent regarding the inner portion of the opening 2. Additionally, the bead 5 and bead 6 do not work in conjunction with one another with respect to the same gasket opening. The bead 5 and the bead 6 work independently with different holes, openings 2 and 3. Therefore, applicants respectfully request the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the above rejection.

Applicants submit that Okazaki alone or combined with any other reference cited by the Examiner do not teach or disclose claim 1 as stated above along with other recited elements. Based on the arguments above, applicants respectfully submit the arguments made above apply equally with respect to amended independent claims 27, 39, 53 and 67. In view of the foregoing remarks, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1, 27, 39, 53 and 67 define over the art cited by the Examiner. Likewise, claims 2-26, 28-38, 40-52, 54-66 and 68-73 also define over the art cited by the Examiner, since each are dependent on the above mentioned claims.

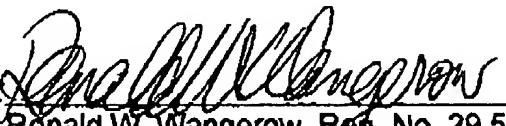
CONCLUSION

It is believed that all of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicant therefore respectfully requests that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw all presently outstanding rejections. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office

Action and the present application is in condition for allowance. Thus, prompt and favorable consideration of this amendment is respectfully requested. If the Examiner believes that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at (734) 354-5445.

Respectfully submitted,

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